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**DD/S&T
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26 April 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science & Technology
SUBJECT : Drone

1. You may recall that we were visited by [redacted] in October 1964 when he was a Vice President of [redacted] In addition to the general briefing on [redacted] capabilities, [redacted] showed you some correspondence he had had with President Kennedy with respect to an intelligence drone which his former company, [redacted] together with [redacted] had looked at. He also expressed the theory that this idea had been sidetracked by being sent to [redacted] Now Larry has left [redacted] and rejoined [redacted] and is apparently in a much better position to reopen the drone idea.

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2. To review his idea, he visualized a fiberglass airframe, with the engine and payload compartment treated to reduce radar cross section, operating at low speed but at high altitude to avoid fighters, i.e., visual intercepts. The cost estimates at that time were [redacted] development and [redacted] per bird (which was recoverable and reusable). He indicated that the early calculations showed a potential cross section of 0.1 square meter. Upon his rejoining [redacted] he reviewed the early work and, in a recent visit, told me that it now looks like the potential cross section might be considerably less than 0.1 square meter, perhaps by a factor of 4.

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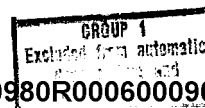
3. I have given some additional thought to this idea. If one could achieve a per/unit cost for a system like this comparable to or less than the cost to shoot it down with SAM's, a net gain to the U. S.

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Declassification Review by NGA

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of great consequence might accrue. With a net positive exchange cost ratio, there would always be a considerable intelligence product, either due to expected frequent defense failures when trying, or due to a choice not to try. Furthermore, the system design criteria might be relaxed by this concept to where it just might be feasible. There is obviously a need for a systems analysis study to get an initial grip on the technical, operational and economic feasibility.

4. I believe that the potential gains do warrant a systems analysis. Would you be amenable to a proposal to accomplish such a study, recognizing that it might cost us, maybe, [] and, also, that someone other than the Agency might be charged with development and operation?

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SIGNED

[]
Chief, Systems Analysis Staff

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